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ABSTRACT

This is a summary in outline form of the English language teaching situation in Cameroon. Cameroon is officially a French/English bilingual state but English at present plays the minor part. There are five francophone and two anglophone provinces with populations of five million and one and a half million respectively. In the anglophone provinces English is the medium of instruction in primary and secondary schools and teacher training colleges. In the francophone provinces, English is taught as a subject in secondary schools and a beginning has been made to introduce English into the primary schools. In the government schools and better private schools it is taught five hours per week in the first two years and three hours per week in the remaining five years. There is a great difference between the public and private sectors in the quality and quantity of teachers. In the main the supply meets the demand in government schools, but in many private schools there are grave shortages. The British Council is involved in the teaching of English in two main ways: (1) as the recruiting agency and administrative support for certain personnel; and (2) in giving advice and assistance where possible. (Author/CFM)

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING PROFILE

COUNTRY: Cameroon

September 1976

## 1. Role of English

1.1 The United Republic of Cameroon, created in 1972 out of the former Federal Republic which was formed on independence in 1960 from the French and British Trust Territories, consists of five francophone and two anglophone provinces with populations of 5 million and 1½ million respectively. Although Cameroon is officially a French/English bilingual state the relative importance of the two languages is still reflected by the numerical distribution of the users. The fact, too, that the centre of government and the main centres of commerce are in the francophone provinces means that English at present plays the minor part.

1.2 In the two anglophone provinces English is the medium of instruction in primary and secondary schools and in teacher training colleges and is widely used as the official language of government and in business affairs.

1.3 In the five francophone provinces, however, English is taught as a subject in secondary schools and a beginning has been made on the introduction of English lessons into francophone primary schools. At the University of Yaounde there is an English degree course in which English is the medium of instruction and a bilingual degree, the English component of which is taught in English. The University also has a programme of Service English for all faculties.

1.4 Although English is still not greatly used as a means of communication in the East and although the majority of government officials have little knowledge of the language, it is recognised that English, apart from being one of the two official languages of the country, is of great importance as a means of international and especially inter-African communication, and many of the more senior government officials are making a serious attempt to learn it. Since unification there has been a fairly large influx of anglophones, both official and private into the East, especially to the capital, and although most of them have to learn French, their anglophone influence has been considerable. Francophone officials have also been posted to the West and since they have to use English to a greater or lesser extent there, the spread of the use of English by francophones is now fairly significant. Official government policy is to make Cameroon a completely bilingual country, though with different levels of bilingualism according to educational attainments, and while it is difficult to imagine that this aim will ever be realised in totality, it seems probable that at least partial achievement will be arrived at within the next 10 or 15 years.

## 2. English within the educational system

2.1 In talking about the Educational System of Cameroon one has to take into account that there are, in fact, two educational systems both of which must be further subdivided into two parts. In the West there is an English medium system based on an inherited British tradition and in the East there is a French medium system based on a French tradition. Both of these systems, however must be divided into the public schools which are completely the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education, and the private schools, which although nominally controlled by the Ministry through a

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Director of Private Education, vary very much both from the schools in the public sector and from each other. These private schools are a significant factor in education in Cameroon since they outnumber the public schools considerably, in a ratio of perhaps 2:1. These private schools vary from the long established, economically sound mission schools to the very dubious profit motive ephemeral institutions. At their best they are very good indeed and at their worst abysmal. A recent comprehensive Presidential decree (September 1976) governing all aspects of private education has just been published. This lays down regulations in the minutest detail for the operation of private schools and it is expected that it will result in a vast improvement of standards and that it will effectively close down those schools at the lower end of the scale which do not conform to minimum standards.

2.2 (a) Francophone areas

In government secondary schools English is taught 5 hours per week in the first two years and 3 hours per week in the remaining five years. An option called "Anglais Renforcée" has recently been introduced by which an additional 3 hours per week is given from year 3 to year 6. This option exists in about one sixth of the schools. Anglais Renforcée has not been very successful, however, since it is not obligatory and it is resisted by many pupils. Although there is a special paper in the BEPC at the end of the first cycle it is not examined in the Baccalaureat and many pupils feel that it is not worth spending extra time on a subject which is not going to produce any visible result (ie a diploma). A project for the teaching of English in the primary schools of the five francophone provinces has now been instituted. A team of British Council recruited experts consisting of a co-ordinator, a teacher trainer and a materials/textbook producer is working in Yaoundé and 3 provincial inspectors, also Council recruited, are working in Centre Sud, Littoral and West Provinces. It is hoped to recruit 2 more inspectors for North and East Provinces in 1977. It will be a number of years, however, before there can be English teachers in all the francophone primary schools.

The better Private Secondary Schools follow roughly the same pattern as that in the government schools.

(b) Anglophone areas

English is the medium of instruction so it may be said that the language is taught at all times. As a timetable subject, however, it averages 5 hours per week.

2.3 (a) In francophone secondary schools there is now no distinction between language and literature.

(b) In the upper classes of secondary schools in the West literature is taught separately to those pupils preparing for GCE.

2.4 (a) In the francophone areas the BEPC (Brevêt d'Enseignement Premier Cycle) is taken after 4 years of the first cycle. After two years in the second cycle Probatoire is taken and at the end of the Third year Baccalaureat.

(b) The London University GCE examinations previously taken in the anglophone provinces are to be replaced by a Cameroon GCE as from June 1977. London University, The Ministry of Overseas Development and the British Council are assisting with this changeover in order to provide a smooth transition and to maintain standards.

2.5 (a) In the East success or failure in English in examinations counts for very little. In the BEPC it has two points out of 18 and in the Probatoire and Baccalaureat 2 to 4 out of 21. For entry to the bilingual degree course at the University, however, a good pass in English is required.

(b) In the West, since ultimately pupils will be aiming at British type examination, success in English examinations plays a large part in promotion procedures.

2.6 (a) and (b) In the Government sector the choice of textbooks and syllabuses is centrally contolled and many of the better private schools have also accepted a similar control by the Ministry of National Education.

2.7 Inspection is controlled by an Inspector General who has national subject inspectors to assist him. In the case of English there are at present a National Inspector of English and an assistant National Inspector of English. In the Provinces, each Education Delegate has a number of local inspectors attached to his office who work both to him and to the National Inspectors. National Inspectors visit schools as often as possible and organise seminars and in-service training. It is expected that a greater number of these will be held in the future with the assistance of local inspectors.

2.8 There are a number of Technical Secondary Schools and Lycée Techniques in which English is an obligatory subject. However the number of hours is limited; in the case of the former 3 in year 1 and 2 each in years 2 and 3. In the Lycée Techniques the situation is rather better. In both cases the basic English lexis for the speciality being followed is provided.

2.9 There is a Centre Linguistique at which English classes are given for adults and also a few evening classes, mainly for adults who have not finished their secondary schooling and require to make up examination.

3. Teaching Cadre

3.1 There is a great difference in the quality and numbers of teachers between the public and the private sectors. In the main the supply meets the demand in government schools but in many of the private schools there are grave shortages.

3.2 (a) In the East $\frac{2}{3}$ of the teachers in Government secondary schools are Cameroonian and $\frac{1}{3}$ expatriate - Peace Corps, other American, Canadian and French. There is only one British teacher. In the primary schools the proportion of local teachers is almost 100%. Accurate figures for the private sector are not available but it is thought that there are probably equal numbers of local and expatriate teachers. There are 9 IVS volunteers in private schools.

(b) In the West the proportion of local teachers in Government Secondary Schools is higher than in the East; possibly the ratio is 3:1. In primary schools there is 100% local staff. In the private schools there are a greater number of expatriates. 6 IVS volunteers teach in private schools.

3.3 (a) Government secondary schools English teaching staff are frequently graduates or at least holders of a professional teaching qualification, CAP or CEG. The position in private schools, however, is very

mixed with a large number of unqualified staff. In primary where English is taught it is being done by teachers with teacher training but not specialised ELT training, imported from the West. There are about 300 of these.

(b) In the West the situation in both Secondary and Primary government schools is better than in the East. There has always been a tradition of teacher training and all teachers are qualified. Even in private schools there is a good proportion of qualified teachers.

3.4 (a) Secondary school teachers are trained mainly in the Ecole Normale and the Ecole Normale Supérieure. English teachers from the ENS have one year at a language school in Britain as part of their training. The University English Department also supplies a certain number of teachers.

(b) Teachers are trained in the West in Private or Government Teacher Training Colleges and there is also a branch of the ENS in the West which trains teachers for advanced level work.

4. Teaching materials

4.1 Since pupils have to supply their own textbooks there is often a shortage because there is no money to buy them. Other teaching aids, which are government supplied, are not too bad.

4.2 (a) The majority of government francophone secondary schools have been using the CLAD "Today's English" series with its accompanying figurines for first cycle classes. It has now been decided to change over to "English for French Speaking Africa" and it is hoped that the transition can be made within the next year or two. In the second cycle classes/Richard and Hall series is still being used but efforts are being made to find a replacement as early as possible. Progress is being made towards the writing by the team involved in the introduction of English into francophone primary schools of a textbook to cover the final three years of the Primary School. The first year of the course has been completed and is presently being tried out.

4.3 (b) In the anglophone provinces Gagg's English Course for Cameroon Primary Schools is almost universally used but after a two year period of research and experimentation at IPAR, Buea the writing of a new course for Primary Schools is to begin in 1977. In secondary schools, Practical English, Books 1 to 5 by Ogundipe and Tregidgo is used as the main course book.

5. English outside the educational system

5.1 There are no private commercial schools in English which properly deserve the name, though there are a few local enterprises of very doubtful quality which attempt to teach English for money.

5.2 The United States Cultural Centre runs English classes on a fee paying, but highly subsidised, basis as part of its programme.

6. British support for the teaching of English

6.1 The Council is involved in teaching of English in two main ways

(a) As the recruiting agency and administrative support for ODM funded Category IV personnel.

(b) In giving advice and assistance where possible.

6.2 (i) Assistant Representative gives a great deal of her time to (a) above and the Representative is involved in (b) especially with the English in francophone primary schools project.

6.2 (ii) The following Council recruited ODM funded ELT staff are or will be shortly working in Cameroon.

University: Department of English
1 language and literature post

Ecole Normale Supérieure, Yaoundé
1 language and methodology post

Ecole Normale Supérieure, Bambili
1 language and methodology post

Ministry of National Education:

1 Inspector/Adviser in ELT
N.W. and S.W. Provinces. Based in Bamenda.

1 Coordinator. English in francophone primary school project

1 Textbook/Materials Producer in same project

1 Teacher Training in same project

1 Provincial Inspector
Littoral Province

1 Provincial Inspector
Centre-Sud Province

1 Provincial Inspector
Ouest Province

IPAR, Buea 1 Textbook writer/curriculum development expert

1 Teacher Trainer

Presidency 1 Tutor to senior Government Officials

6.2 (iii) There are still some IVS volunteers teaching English in Private secondary schools but IVS policy is to withdraw them completely after 1977/78. Two IVS volunteers are working in the English in francophone primary schools project.

(iv) There is only one other British teacher working in the educational system, the wife of the Inspector/Adviser in ELT for the N.W. and S.W. Provinces, on local contract.